



Division of Public Health Services

Office of the Assistant Director

Public Health Preparedness Services

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JANET NAPOLITANO, GOVERNOR

CATHERINE R. EDEN, DIRECTOR

December 21, 2004

Dear Health Care Provider:

In the face of nationwide influenza vaccine shortages, the Arizona Department of Health Services has been working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), local health departments, and healthcare providers like you to make sure that influenza vaccine gets to those people at highest risk for complications: persons aged 65 years or older, children less than 2 years old, pregnant women, and people of any age who have underlying health conditions, such as heart or lung disease, transplant recipients, or persons with HIV/AIDS.

This letter provides you with our new vaccination recommendations for high-risk priority groups in adult and pediatric populations.

High-risk Priority Groups for Influenza Vaccine

Effective January 3, 2005, the CDC is recommending that the priority groups for inactivated influenza vaccine be expanded to adults age 50-64 years and household contacts and caregivers of persons in high-risk groups. These federal recommendations only apply if the local vaccine supply is adequate to meet this new demand.

Some Arizona providers are reporting that they have reached all of their high-risk patients and they have leftover vaccine. Other providers report that they do not have enough vaccine to meet the demand for high-risk patients.

As a health care provider, you are best equipped to assess your individual vaccine supply and to prioritize the health needs of the persons that you serve. ***If, by January 3, 2005, you have completed vaccinating the highest risk patients in your practice or if demand for influenza vaccine among your high-risk patients has diminished, we are recommending that you begin vaccinating contacts of high-risk patients and patients 50-64 years old.***

Pediatric vaccine

There is no shortage of either Vaccines for Children (VFC) vaccine or thimerosal-free pediatric vaccines!

Because of the large supply of pediatric vaccine, the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices broadened its recommendations for VFC vaccine. VFC vaccine can now be given to children and adolescents aged 2 through 18 years who are household contacts or out-of-home caregivers of persons in high-risk groups (e.g. persons aged 65 years or older, transplant recipients, persons with HIV/AIDS, and children aged less than 2 years). This new VFC resolution goes into effect immediately.

If you have questions about VFC eligible groups and/or VFC influenza vaccine, please call Andie Denious (602-364-3626), Cherry Boardman (602-364-3644), Carole Boble (602-364-3641), Crystal Metelski (602-364-3652), or Teresa Saenz (602-364-3650).

Arizona health care providers are still authorized to purchase approximately 25,000 doses of thimerosal-free pediatric vaccine individual dose syringes (0.25 mL). These 25,000 doses do not have VFC restrictions. Remember that children are continually reaching the age of six months, and should receive their first influenza vaccine.

Children under 9 years of age receiving their first dose of influenza vaccine will need two doses at least four weeks apart in order to be fully protected. However, if they have ever received a dose in a preceding season, they only need a single dose every season.

Therefore, it is important to continue to offer influenza vaccine to young children throughout the influenza season. First, it will protect them. Second, if they receive at least one dose of vaccine this year, they will only need a single dose every subsequent season.

Thank you for your influenza vaccine efforts on behalf of your patients. If you have further questions, feel free to call our Arizona Immunization Program Office telephone numbers given above, or you can call either of us at (602) 364-3289.

Sincerely,



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(Acting)



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